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CELASTRUS SCANDENS **BITTERSWEET**

Bittersweet is a climbing woody vine with stems that often have coiled segments and are up to 18 m long. The alternate, elliptic leaf blades, 5-10 cm long, taper to a pointed tip and have finely serrated edges and petioles reaching up to 3 cm long. The greenish, unisexual flowers are borne in narrow inflorescences, 3-8 cm long, at the end of the stems. The flowers have a cup-shaped calyx, 2-3 mm high, composed of 5 sepals that are united at the base and of 5 spreading petals that are 3-6 mm long. Male flowers have 5 stamens, while female flowers have a single 3-parted ovary. The fruit is an orange or yellowish capsule, 1 cm in diameter, that splits along three lines to expose the single, large, bright orangish red seed. Flowering and fruiting May-July; fruits persisting in fall.

The combination of alternate leaves, lack of tendrils, and orange fruits with red seeds distinguish this species from all other vines in our area.